

# Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County Year 2000 Transportation Plan

CARL E. O'NEAL

Director of Transportation

Fort Wayne, Indiana

## INTRODUCTION

The Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County area serves as the economic, industrial, commercial, recreational, and cultural heart of a tri-state area including Northeastern Indiana, Northwestern Ohio, and Southern Michigan. The viability of this regional center, as well as the viability of the region itself, depends on a balanced transportation system. This system must be able to move people and the goods they demand to, from, and within the area safely and efficiently.

In order to assure the healthy growth, orderly development, and economic prosperity of the area, the public officials of Fort Wayne, New Haven, and Allen County have committed themselves to developing a functional, well-coordinated, and safe transportation system. This commitment is evident in the Year 2000 Transportation Plan, which will be referred to throughout this paper as the "Plan." The Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County Transportation Study will be referred to as the "Study," while the approximately 320 square miles included in the analysis will be called the "Study Area." The Study is a comprehensive, continuing and cooperative effort that has involved all levels of government including: the cities of Fort Wayne and New Haven; Allen County; the Indiana State Highway Commission; and the Federal Highway Administration.

As a result of the Study, a long range transportation plan has been recommended for the Study Area. The Plan is quite detailed in its recommendations for a future transportation system capable of meeting the anticipated traffic demands for the year 2000, yet the Plan remains general in nature.

This paper is a layman's guide to highlight the key improvements proposed for the Study Area.

## PRESENT PROBLEMS—THE NEED FOR A PLAN

The Study Area, as the focal point and center of activities for the tri-state area (Northeastern Indiana, Northwestern Ohio and Southern Michigan draws traffic from a wide geographical area. Persons in surrounding cities come to the Fort Wayne area for their commercial,

cultural, and recreational needs. Likewise businesses from the tri-states use the Fort Wayne area as the core of industrial, trucking, and distribution activities. The Study Area's location between such larger cities as Indianapolis, Columbus, Toledo, Chicago, and Detroit also adds significantly to the total number of cars and trucks on the streets and roads of the Study Area.

A major portion of traffic coming to our area, and traffic that is just passing through our area now uses the four Federal Highways (US 24, US 27, US 30, and US 33) and four State Routes (SR 1, SR 3, SR 14, and SR 37) which run through the Fort Wayne Area. This traffic adds significantly to a system already overburdened with local traffic, adding to congestion at many points along these routes. Congestion wastes gas, contributes to air pollution, noise, and accidents.

As a result of the shortcomings in our system of streets and roads (outlines below), congestion is becoming more and more of a problem in the Study Area. These shortcomings among others include:

An extreme shortage of continuous roads outside the central city area which causes local, regional, and pass through traffic to funnel into the central business district (CBD). Narrow residential type streets must then be used for vehicular and heavy truck traffic. Natural barriers to traffic, such as the intersection of three major rivers (St. Joseph, St. Mary's, and Maumee) in downtown Fort Wayne. A major portion of the traffic must then channel over the few bridges available.

The radial (spoke-like) arrangement of major roads within the system which draws traffic into the center of the city. This is responsible for a great deal of CBD congestion.

Numerous diagonal-type intersections which cause drivers to make sharp, hazardous turns.

Streets with dangerous jobs at major intersections.

Narrow right-of-ways on many of the Study Area's major streets which are overburdened with traffic, yet are nearly impossible to widen.

Outlined railroad underpasses and overpasses. They were built five short years after the invention of the Model T automobile, in a transportation era much different than today's. Many of them are inadequate for present traffic and cause it to constrict to fit the maximum available space.

Railroad crossings at major streets which cause traffic to back up while waiting for trains to pass.

The physical features of the transportation system, however, do not account for all of the Study Area's difficulties. Many other factors come into play such as:

Residents of the Study Area are used to the freedom, comfort, and mobility that personal autos provide. They resist any change which would restrict their freedom.

Many persons drive alone in cars. This increases the number of cars on the roads and streets.

Autos are too often used on one-stop shopping trips. This also increases the number of cars on the roads.

The status that is still attached to auto ownership. Many persons will not voluntarily use public transportation because of this.

The bus company has a responsibility to serve a very diverse group of people including the elderly and handicapped. It is very difficult to serve these groups adequately.

Bus and truck routes are limited due to very tight turns, narrow streets, overhead obstacles, and other such nuisances. The buses and trucks must use the routes available to them which often run through residential areas, adding congestion and noise to these areas.

Congressional within the Study Area make it difficult for buses to remain on schedule.

The present bus fleet is small. This causes long waits at stops between buses.

Many bus patrons must stand in order to get a ride during peak hours, while at nonpeak hours many seats are left empty. Empty seats are not cost-effective.

The above points represent only a few of the complex transportation problems within the Study Area which have given the area a notorious reputation among the truckers, visitors, and citizens of the area who travel these roads daily.

Unless these problems are resolved, the Study Area may well lose additional industry frustrated by a lack of effective access and shipping routes. The central business district will continue to be increasingly congested, gasoline will continue to be wasted, and air pollution and noise will continue to increase.

The solution to these problems can be found through a comprehensive, coordinated, and continuing transportation planning effort. This

type of planning takes into account the land use patterns of an area, population and economic forecasts, inventories of present facilities, traffic volume counts, the protection of the environment for future generations, and conservation of our nation's energy resources.

Sound transportation planning paves the way for the most cost-effective and efficient system possible by:

Improving and maximizing the efficiency of the existing system.

Building new facilities only if and when they are justified.

Reducing the travel times of most trips.

Exploring new technologies of moving people and goods faster, easier, and more efficiently.

Examining new technologies which could be used to eliminate the need for some travel.

## PREDICTING THE FUTURE

In order to produce a plan that will attempt to satisfy the Study Area's travel needs 20 years from now, planners must analyze how, when, and where people and goods travel. This information along with past and present statistics of population, land use, vehicle ownership, employment, etc., enables planners and analysts to identify factors that will affect travel and to forecast how people will make decisions about travel in the future.

The population of the Study Area in 1970 (the last verified U.S. Census) was about 256,000. The year 2000 estimates of the same area were prepared cooperatively by the Coordinating Council, the Fort Wayne City Plan Department. Original estimates indicated a population increase of 52% from 1970 to a year 2000 total of 388,953. Recently, the estimates were lowered to 338,313—an increase of 32%. The number of vehicles per household is expected to drop somewhat by the year 2000, but the larger population will mean more vehicles overall. The labor force is also expected to increase to a total of 183,354. This represents a 47% increase over the 1970 figure.

The increases in population, employment, and vehicle ownership bring with them an increase in travel demand. Original estimates of travel demands (the number of trips that are expected to be made) projected to the year 2000 showed a 49% increase in the number of trips per day. This figure has also been recently reassessed and now indicates a 43% increase. Public transportation, with a larger bus fleet and improved service, is expected to carry a significant portion of these increased travel demands. It is obvious, however, that major improvements to our street and road network are essential in order to have a safe

and efficient transportation system. The Year 2000 Transportation Plan addresses itself to this goal.

## THE PLAN

### *Highway*

The Year 2000 Transportation Plan includes 40 street and road projects which will add to and complement the existing system. With the completion of these projects the future urban transportation system should be able to provide safe and efficient travel throughout the area as well as provide area residents with as much comfort and convenience as possible.

The recommended Year 2000 Transportation system was designed to eliminate the problems described earlier. The plan includes:

Bypass which would connect with I-69 south of Fort Wayne, skirt New Haven's eastern edge, and continue northwest to connect with I-69 near DuPont Road. The bypass would eliminate much of the area's congestion by:

Re-routing truck traffic away from residential areas and around Fort Wayne and New Haven.

Re-routing "pass through" traffic around the cities.

Offering local residents a route alternative other than Coliseum Boulevard, downtown Fort Wayne, or other highly congested areas.

In addition, a bypass should improve safety. Increased accessibility to the urbanized area would serve as an incentive for new industry and business to locate in the area. New businesses and industries would add new jobs to the area and would improve the Study Area's economic stability. The bypass would serve as a boundary for urbanization through an aggressive zoning policy to preserve the area outside the bypass for its much-needed agricultural use.

New 4-lane construction which would connect Ardmore Avenue with Hillegas Road near Fort Wayne's western edge, and Maplecrest Road with Adams Center Road near the city's eastern edge, complemented by the widening to four lanes of the existing Ardmore, Hillegas, Maplecrest and Adams Center Roads. In addition, Maplecrest Road would be extended north to DuPont Road and Ardmore Avenue would extend south to the Baer Field Thruway. These new 4-lane roads (Ardmore, Hillegas, Maplecrest and Adams Center) complete with railroad crossing grade separations would divert traffic from congested areas and distribute it more evenly throughout the Study Area. It would also add to the street

and road network's continuity, providing convenient north-south routes for area residents.

The widening to 6 lanes of:

Northrop Street from Washington Center to Ley Road.

Coldwater Road from Washington Center Road to Coliseum Boulevard.

Clinton Street from Washington Center Road to Medical Park Drive.

Coliseum Boulevard from Anthony Boulevard to Crescent Avenue.

The widening to 4 lanes of:

St. Joe Road/Hobson Road from Rothman to Coliseum Boulevard.

Wells Street from Coliseum Boulevard south to the new Wells Street bridge.

Broadway Avenue from Jefferson Boulevard to Bluffton Road, complete with enlargement of the railroad overpasses.

Anthony from Maumee to Creighton Avenue with railroad overpasses enlarged.

Hessen Cassel from Oxford Street to Tillman Road.

Illinois Road from Hadley Road to Scott Road.

Lower Huntington Road from Ardmore Avenue to the Baer Field Thruway.

Crescent Avenue/Stellhorn Road from East State Street to Maplecrest Road.

Lake Avenue from Coliseum Boulevard to Maplecrest Road extended.

East State Boulevard from Reed Road to Maplecrest Road.

St. Joe Center Road from St. Joe Road to Maplecrest Road.

U.S. 30 from its intersection with U.S. 24, to the proposed bypass east of New Haven.

These projects are proposed to improve the Study Area's regional accessibility, and street and road continuity, as well as to reduce the many problems now plaguing the system.

## *Transit*

Major improvements to the quality of bus service and increases in the number of buses are planned to serve the community's public transportation needs for the year 2000.

Needless to say, if more people were willing to use buses there would be less cars on the roads adding to congestion. In order to encourage the use of transit, it must be made more convenient. Reductions in the time spent waiting for a bus, new bus routes to serve more areas, and park-and-ride lots are all things that can increase the convenience of bus travel. The service improvements planned in the Year 2000 Transportation Plan include:

**Increasing the bus fleet.** In 1976 the bus company had 60 buses. By the year 2000 the bus company will need 210 buses. This represents an increase three and one half times greater than the present fleet size.

**Reducing headways** (the amount of time you spend waiting for a bus). One of the most obvious factors presently discouraging bus usage is this waiting time. The Plan is based on an average headway of 10 minutes—31 minutes less than the average 1976 waiting time. The increased fleet size will allow this headway to be reached and reduced headways should attract more passengers.

**Extension of service** into suburban areas not served by transit at present. As the urbanized area expands, so must the transit system if it is to attract potential riders.

**Park-and ride lots.** There are currently several park-and-ride lots around Fort Wayne. Suburban and rural residents are encouraged to park their cars at the city's fringe and ride the bus into the city. The addition of more park-and-ride lots is needed. Hopefully, this is an area that could be explored for potential bus riders.

**Increased express service.** The Plan encourages the expansion of express service from the central business district to suburban fringe areas particularly during peak hours, complemented by the provision of park-and-ride lots. Express routes to major employment centers might also attract residents of the area to use the transit system.

**A center for transit activities** in downtown Fort Wayne. This facility could serve as a convenient transfer point for bus patrons and would provide such amenities as shelter from inclement weather, and bus scheduling information.

Other improvements suggested by the plan include more efficient

scheduling on service coordination, increased transit service on weekends, surcharges for premium service, a downtown transit shuttle, and publicly provided service for the elderly and handicapped. In addition, transit planning should include consideration of such things as: light rail, bicycle and pedestrian facilities; as well as the return of the trolley.

Public transportation will increase its role in moving the people of the Study Area but will not be a complete substitute for private transportation. The increased service of the public transportation system, along with a concentrated effort to familiarize potential patrons of the advantages of bus travel (economic, environmental, etc.) and its convenience should result in large gains in ridership, helping to offset the costs of the capital improvements necessary to provide the increased service.

## SUMMARY

No viable transportation plan is static. The planning process must incorporate modifications to any approved plan as the planning environment changes over time. The public officials of the Area have committed themselves to a safe and efficient transportation system. The Year 2000 Transportation Plan indicates this.

The Plan includes improvements to the street and road network in the area through construction of a critically needed bypass, two new crosstown roads, numerous road widenings and railroad grade separations. Substantial improvements to the public transit system will include more buses, route extensions, reductions in waiting and transfer times, and the increased provision of park-and-ride lots.